

Duxbury Clipper, Thursday, May 31, 1973

## Historic Cane To Mary Gay



Sunday afternoon, Theodore Reed, chairman of the Duxbury Board of Selectmen, handed a cane traditionally presented to "The Oldest Female Citizen of Duxbury, Massachusetts," to Miss Mary Gay, one of the town's three centenarians.



L to r, Mrs. Coffin, Miss Gay, Mr. Reed

Miss Gay, who lives at 479 Washington St., was born in Oscoda, Michigan, on Aug. 23, 1872. She is about two weeks older than Miss Ruby Graves of Newfield House, a long-time resident of Surplus St., who was born on Sept. 7, 1872.

Mrs. Charles Sabine of Chestnut Hill and King Caesar Rd. was born on Sept. 30, 1872.

Duxbury is proud of its three centenarians, all of whom love the town and are interested in community affairs.

At Sunday's presentation ceremonies Sunday was Mrs. Winthrop Coffin of King Caesar Rd., whose late mother, Mrs. Ida Aldrich Burleigh (Mrs. Charles C. Burleigh Jr.) received the cane from Selectman Chairman Philip Delano when she was 99 years old. She died on Jan. 31, 1955, within 27 days of the age of 100.

An excerpt from the Duxbury Clipper dated July 22, 1954:

"Friday afternoon Philip Delano, chairman of the Board of Selectmen, presented Mrs. Ida Aldrich Burleigh (Mrs. Charles C. Burleigh Jr.) with an ebony walking cane with a gold handle inscribed: '1939. Presented by Reuben Peterson, M.D., to the Oldest Female Citizen of Duxbury, Massachusetts to be transmitted.'

"In 1939 the late Dr. Peterson of Powder Point gave the town this cane to be transmitted under the stated conditions. The cane was first in the possession of Mrs. Selina Beale, who received it on Sept. 26, 1939.

"On Nov. 20, the cane passed to Ella W. Chandler. Carrie L. White was given the cane on Nov. 2, 1943, Mercy Parker on Dec. 15, 1946, and Sarah Randall on May 20, 1949.

"Mrs. Burleigh, who was having afternoon tea when Mr. Delano called on her, is a patrician looking person, who will be a hundred years old on Feb. 27, 1955. She is the oldest person to receive the cane. She lives with her daughter, Mrs. Winthrop Coffin, on King Caesar Rd." (Mrs. Winthrop Coffin is 96 years old.)

The Clipper wondered why there was no cane presentation ceremony since an ebony walking stick was handed to Mrs. Burleigh in 1954. There were two reasons, according to Philip Delano, who says he came across when he tried to honor two elderly ladies. In one case, it developed that the designated recipient was 3 days younger than another senior citizen. The other case was more amusing. The designee became highly indignant when Mr. Delano told her she was the oldest woman in Duxbury. "I thought she was going to throw me out of her house," Mr. Delano recalls. "And she wasn't very old, after all. She was only in her early nineties."

## MORE ABOUT THE CANE

Before World War I The now defunct Boston Post inaugurated the custom of giving an ebony walking stick (known as the "Boston Post Cane") to the oldest male inhabitant of each city and town in the Commonwealth. The first Duxbury resident to receive it was Captain Josephus Dawes, who died in 1910.

### OTHER RECIPIENTS

June 9, 1920 Louis M. Bailey  
Oct. 1, 1924 George H. Bailey  
Dec. 1, 1927 James E. Winson  
Mar. 26, 1929 Orlando Palmer  
Also 1029 Thomas Ellis  
Dec. 7, 1937 Herbert C. Wright  
June 4, 1938 Charles Holmes  
June 26, 1941 Wilfred C. Dawes  
June 21, 1946 Jawett S. Willey  
July 27, 1954 Eugene Covell

### CANE FOR WOMEN

In 1939 Dr. Reuben Peterson donated a cane to be given to the oldest living woman in Duxbury.

The Reuben Peterson M.D. Cane went to the following:  
Sept. 26, 1939 Mary Selina Beale  
Nov. 20, 1942 Ella W. Chandler  
Nov. 2, 1943 Connie L. White  
Dec. 15, 1946 Mercy A. Parker  
May 20, 1949 Sarah E. Randall  
July 16, 1954 Ida Burleigh  
May 27, 1973 Mary Gay